



MOSQUITO AND DISEASE CONTROL MEASURE

by the San Benito County Mosquito Abatement Program

Watch for Your Mailed Ballot Starting May 8

Information Fact Sheet

Starting May 8 ballots will be mailed to property owners in northern San Benito County for a proposed Mosquito and Disease Control Measure. If approved, this measure would fund services to:

- ***Control mosquitoes using environmentally safe approaches.***
- ***Regularly test for and help prevent diseases carried by mosquitoes such as West Nile Virus and Western Equine Encephalitis, as well as new and emerging diseases carried by mosquitoes.***
- ***Provide mosquitofish for ornamental fish ponds, horse troughs and other appropriate habitats.***

What Is the Proposed Mosquito and Disease Control Measure?

San Benito County does not currently have a program in place to provide regular, year-round mosquito control and disease prevention services. In the past two years the County received special State emergency grants to combat West Nile Virus, which funded limited services. However, the State emergency funding for these services has been exhausted and additional State funding is unlikely. Therefore, a local funding measure is needed for the year-round control of mosquitoes and the diseases they transmit.

This measure will be decided by mailed ballot. It will allow benefited property owners in northern San Benito County (area includes the cities of San Juan Bautista and Hollister, and the communities of Aromas, Tres Pinos and Paicines) to decide if mosquito and disease control services should be provided in their area. If the mosquito and disease control ballot measure is not approved, no such services will be provided.

Why Is This Measure Needed?

San Benito County is currently one of the only areas in the State without regular mosquito control services. This measure will provide the funding needed to protect public health, animals and wildlife in the northern, most populated areas of the County from mosquitoes and the diseases they transmit.



Mosquitoes spread diseases like West Nile Virus



Technicians would test for disease year-round

How Would the Program Test for Diseases?

In order to test for mosquito-borne viruses such as Western Equine Encephalitis and West Nile Virus, the County would use successful disease surveillance approaches such as possibly sentinel flocks of chickens, since these viruses often appear first in birds. Another disease surveillance approach is the use of mosquito traps. These traps require significant effort to operate because they must be set in the evening in locations throughout the area and must be emptied the following morning. Insects collected would be counted, identified and if needed sent to a laboratory for disease testing.

If disease is discovered, the County would implement a response plan that could include focused abatement efforts in the area, public education and notification, and other services as warranted.

Environmentally Safe Services

Mosquitoes would be successfully controlled by using environmentally safe approaches that focus on finding the sources of mosquito breeding (usually stagnant, standing water) and eliminating immature mosquitoes (larvae) before they emerge as adults and begin biting people and animals. By regularly testing for the presence of disease in mosquitoes, these diseases can be detected early and additional control measures can be taken to protect public health.

What Are the Specifics of the Measure?

The measure would provide funding for the following:

Mosquito Control - Year-round control of mosquito sources before immature mosquitoes (larvae) emerge as adults and begin biting people and animals, using environmentally sensitive methods. Free mosquito-eating fish for ornamental fish ponds as well as agricultural and natural mosquito breeding sources.

West Nile Virus Disease Prevention - Implementation of year-round testing for West Nile Virus and other diseases, and enhancements to prevention services in locations in which the diseases are found.

Disease Surveillance/Prevention - Year-round testing and monitoring for other diseases carried by mosquitoes, such as Western Equine Encephalitis, dog heartworm, and malaria. If diseases are discovered, the County would take actions to help prevent a disease outbreak.

Community Education - Regularly educate the public about protecting themselves and their pets from diseases carried by mosquitoes and other insects, and how to prevent mosquito breeding in backyard locations.

How Will This Measure Be Decided?

This measure will be decided by property owners through a mailed ballot process established by the Taxpayer's Right To Vote On Taxes Act of 1996 (approved by voters as Proposition 218). Please watch for your ballot by mail in mid May.

How Do I Know the Funds Will Be Used Wisely and for Their Intended Purpose?

The Measure includes several layers of accountability to ensure that all funds are expended properly on mosquito and disease control:

- Funds can only be spent on mosquito and disease control services within the same areas of San Benito County in which they are raised.
- The budget for the services proposed for each year will be presented to the public annually, including a professional audit.
- The budget and services will be overseen by the County Board of Supervisors and also possibly a citizens' oversight committee.

What if the Measure Is Not Approved?

If the Mosquito and Disease Control Measure is not approved, San Benito County would not receive any mosquito and mosquito-borne disease protection services from assessment fees.

What are the Proposed Rates?

Single family residential properties would contribute \$9.80 per year. Apartments have an assessment of \$5.39 per dwelling unit for the first 20 units and \$0.98 per unit for any units over 20. The assessment for agricultural properties is \$0.08 per acre, and \$0.016 per acre for dry pasture and timberlands.

Additional Information

For additional information on the Mosquito and Disease Control Measure, please contact the San Benito County Agricultural Commissioner at (831) 637-5344.



Backyard Mosquito Breeding Sources

Look for your ballot in your mail box after May 8.